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SOCI

SUBJECT: SERBIAN ELECTIONS IN KOSOVO: NO INCIDENTS, RADICAL  
PARTY SUPPORT DECLINES IN FAVOR OF DS, DSS

REF: A. PRISTINA 50

[1](#)B. 06 PRISTINA 905

[1](#)C. 06 PRISTINA 985

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Kosovo Serbs voted peacefully at polling stations throughout Kosovo in the Serbian parliamentary elections on January 21. There were no significant incidents. Preliminary results indicate that Kosovo Serb support for the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) has fallen markedly since the last elections in 2003, with the residual votes going to democratic parties including the DS and DSS. At least one prominent Kosovo Serb, Goran Bogdanovic, won a seat in the Serbian parliament, but told us that he might not accept it. END SUMMARY.

KOSOVO SERBS VOTED PEACEFULLY AND UNIMPEDED

[1](#)2. (C) On January 21, USOP informal monitoring teams deployed around Kosovo observed Kosovo Serbs voting peacefully and unimpeded in the Serbian parliamentary elections at polling stations in Serb majority villages and towns throughout Kosovo. While we did not see large crowds of voters, we noted a constant stream of activity around polling stations, with people coming in and out and enjoying the beautiful sunny day, with temperatures in the sixties. The vote was highly contested (Ref A), and villages were plastered with competing election posters and graffiti from parties ranging from the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), Serbian President Boris Tadic's Democratic Party (DS), the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), Serbian PM Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), Socialists, the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), G17 Plus, and others.

[1](#)3. (C) Kosovo Police Service (KPS) presence was minimal but visible, while KFOR was out in force (7,500 personnel Kosovo-wide plus air assets). The only incident reported was one in Babin Most (Obiliq/Obilic municipality), in which a ballot box broke and some ballots fell out when a Kosovo Serb tried to throw the box into the street. Serb polling officials closed the polling station.

#### KOSOVO SERBS TURNED AWAY FROM THE RADICALS

¶4. (C) According to preliminary unofficial results from the OSCE, 48.6 percent of eligible Kosovo Serbs voted in the election, compared to 90 percent in the October referendum on the Serbian constitution. (NOTE. All of our observation teams noted a much higher turnout during the January 21 election than during the October referendum (Ref B). However, the fact that voting was more compacted this time (taking place on just one day compared to two in October) could explain the perceived difference in turnout. END NOTE).

¶5. (C) Although Kosovo has traditionally been a radical party stronghold, preliminary results indicate that support for the SRS has fallen among Kosovo Serbs. Unofficial results from the OSCE show that the majority of Kosovo Serbs voted for the DSS.

¶6. (C) At least one prominent Kosovo Serb -- Goran Bogdanovic of the DS and the Serbian List for Kosovo and Metohija (SLKM) -- won a seat in the parliament. However, Bogdanovic told us on January 22 that he may not accept the seat because he would prefer to focus on Kosovo (as opposed to Serbian state) politics. SLKM leader Oliver Ivanovic, head of Nebojsa Covic's Social Democratic Party (SDP), bemoaned the fact that his party has lost significant support since the last parliamentary election in 2003, when it received 16.7 percent of votes. Ivanovic did not win a seat because his party -- with only 4.6 percent of votes -- did not even reach the minimum five percent threshold.

¶7. (C) Ever since Kostunica ousted Covic from his position as chief of Belgrade's Coordination Center for Kosovo and

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Metohija (CCK) and replaced him with DSS hard-liner Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, the popularity and power of the DSS has been rising in Kosovo, at the expense of Covic's SDP. The CCK is the primary mechanism by which the Serbian government funnels financial support to Kosovo Serbs (Ref C). Just days before the election, Raskovic-Ivic was in northern Kosovo inaugurating several new CCK-funded sites, including 30 new apartments for staff at the Serb parallel university in northern Mitrovica, as well as a new economic faculty, two departments of the art faculty, a student parliament and a school for children with special needs.

#### ALBANIAN REACTION MUTED

¶8. (C) Reaction by Kosovo Albanians to the election was muted. According to media reports, Kosovo Deputy Prime Minister Lutfi Haziri commented that this was, in his view, the last time Kosovo Serbs would vote in a Serbian election. Out in the villages, Kosovo Albanians gladly and even cheerfully pointed us towards out-of-the-way Kosovo Serb polling stations.

¶9. (C) COMMENT. Kosovo Serbs appear to have shifted their support away from the Radicals and towards Kostunica's DSS, which in the past year has consolidated its control over the financial resources Kosovo Serbs receive from the Serbian government. Our sense is that Kosovo Serbs seem to harbor no more illusions that the Radical Party will, as it has promised, "fight" to keep Kosovo in Serbia. Kostunica and his DSS have also told Kosovo Serbs what they want to hear -- that they will keep Kosovo in Serbia -- which Serbs choose to believe despite ample evidence that such an outcome would be untenable for the long-term. END COMMENT.

¶10. (U) Post clears this message in its entirety for release to Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.  
KAIDANOW